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Penang prepares for January 2025 dry season as water reserves remain low



GEORGE TOWN: Penang is preparing for its next dry season in January 2025 as September rainfall fails to fill its water reserves to safe levels.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk K. Pathmanathan, in a statement, advised Penangites to use water wisely to help the state's water reserves recover.

"After eight dry months in 2024, the effective capacities of the Air Itam and the Teluk Bahang dams are finally showing improvements with heavy rainfall in Penang since Sept 1,"

"However, the reserves of these two dams must reach significantly higher levels before the next dry season, which is expected to begin in January 2025," he said in a statement on Monday (Sept 23).

As of Monday (Sept 23), the water levels at the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams were 58.3% and 31.3%, respectively. The water level at Mengkuang Dam was at 90.3%.

"Our primary mission is to facilitate optimal refilling of the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams from September to December 2024.

"Depending on the volume of rainfall and water consumption, it is plausible for the Air Itam Dam's effective capacity to increase from 58.3% today to 85% or more by December 2024," he said.

Pathmanathan also said that it would take a large volume of rainfall for the effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam to improve from 31.3% now to 80% or more by December 2024.

He said the Air Itam Dam's effective capacity is 2,159 million litres (ML), while the Teluk Bahang Dam's is 19,240 ML.

"Of the three dams, the one in Air Itam is the smallest. It serves about 28,948 consumers in the nearby area," he said.

Pathmanathan said that since February 2024, PBAPP, in its Air Itam Dam Action Plan 2024 (AIDAP 2024), has been pumping up to 33 million litres per day (MLD) of treated water from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) into the Air Itam Dam service area.

"The plan minimises the daily drawdowns from this dam and facilitates faster refilling," he said.

Pathmanathan said the Teluk Bahang Dam has a maximum effective capacity of 18,240 ML and serves about 45,850 consumers in Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi, Tanjung Bungah and nearby areas.

"The Teluk Bahang Dam is refilled primarily by rainfall in the Teluk Bahang water catchment areas (WCA).

"During wet seasons (including the present wet season), PBAPP pumps raw water from the Batu Ferringhi and Sungai Pinang WCA to refill the Teluk Bahang Dam as quickly as possible," he said.

Pathmanathan said on the mainland, the Expanded Mengkuang Dam (EMD) water reserves have almost reached the optimal level.

"Its reserves are channelled to the Sungai Dua WTP whenever PBAPP cannot abstract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda (Penang's primary raw water resource).

"Treated water from the Sungai Dua WTP is supplied to about 465,000 consumers in all five districts in Penang, on the mainland and island," he said.